

OGC 70-0797

15 May 1970



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Dear [REDACTED]

Mr. Helms has asked me to respond to your letter of May 7, 1970.

I believe the most efficient way for an individual citizen to express his views is through the vote. In this connection, let me explain a bit about the function of this Agency. As you probably know, our primary duty is to furnish foreign intelligence information and estimates on foreign developments to the policymakers of Government. We are specifically prohibited from any internal-security activities and consequently are not directly involved in domestic matters. All of us who make up the staff of the Agency are, of course, personally concerned with the serious problems confronting our country, both domestic and foreign, but in view of its basic role, the Agency as such can have little impact on the domestic side. Obviously, intelligence contributes to the formulation of policy, but if we are to maintain our standards of objectivity we cannot and should not play a decisive role.

The Government is made up of many components, each with its particular statutory responsibilities and limitations on those responsibilities. That is why I feel, as I said in opening, the private citizen's best chance of influencing the course of Government is through his elective representatives in the Congress.

Sincerely,

cc: Asst to DCI-Mr. Goodwin
ER w/basic via O/DCI
✓Legislative Counsel
General Counsel

s/
Lawrence R. Houston
General Counsel

20-2-44

May 7, 1970

Director of the C. I. A.
Richard Helms
C.I. A. Headquarters
Langley, Virginia

Dear Sir:

Recently in a news item, I noticed that you were present in the small group of men who made the decision to send American troops into Cambodia. We learned that Sec. of State Rogers did not approve of this move and that Sec. of Defence Laird also had grave doubt about the move. We were told that Attorney General Mitchell was very much in favor and so were the military. No mention was made of your opinion. Some years ago I naively thought that the C.I. A. only gathered information and then gave it to the Executive Branch in an orderly resumé. However, because of some of the strange things going on in U.S. foreign policy, I did some reading in the library. From numerous articles and books, with some effort, it is possible to find out that CIA has tremendous power, unlimited resources, its own air force (unmarked), its own military force (not in uniform), paid mercenaries from other lands, and it would seem, its own foreign policy. Oddly enough, this final bit of information is often hinted at in the press, mentioned in passing by Senators, but for some reason there never is a full disclosure of this hidden power of a hidden part of our government.

Since the National Security Act of 1947 the CIA has been an independent arm of the Executive Branch, accountable only to the President and to a watch-dog committee of the Congress, a committee which never calls a meeting. With each administration the CIA has gained a bit more power, grown a bit larger, managed to get more hidden bank accounts and stepped outside of the usual democratic processes of checks and balances.

After some nights of lost sleep, wondering just who is running the foreign policy, I decided I would ask you some questions. I do not expect an answer. However, I do think that you should know that there are lots of middle-aged silent Americans, who ask each other these questions, who are puzzled by the "new speak" of our foreign policy. This uneasy feeling is not new. Many of us wondered about the CIA during the Kennedy Administration, and after the Bay of Pigs and the disclosure of its activities in training the forces of invasion, our uneasiness grew. Guatemala, Greece, Dominican Republic, Iran-- wherever a government, for whatever reason, was turning toward a more liberal left, perhaps favoring land reform and the working man rather than the big business man or the foreign investor, a military coup resulted with strong repression of the fundamental rights-- speech, assembly, and so on. Why do we find that in all of these cases and others, the CIA actually helped supply men and money to put in power a military regime?

We see a more or less strong military regime now in power in Saigon. Repression is not unusual in that city for those who disagree with the government. In the fall and winter we read of the activities of "unidentified"

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American men, fighting and "advising" in Laos. Just recently Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia was overthrown by a rightist military man, and then we promptly invaded Cambodia. Before that Sihanouk had tried to maintain neutrality and had objected to the use of Cambodia by Vietnamese, both north and south. (After all the Cambodians and Vietnamese have hated each other for a couple of thousand years!) They also tried to keep us out-- not wanting Cambodia to turn into a bloody battlefield. With him gone (although many, many Cambodians prefer Prince Sihanouk to General Lon Nol) we are using Cambodia as we please. Did the CIA maneuver this coup? It has happened so many times before, it seems likely.

Do we want Indochina to become part of the United States? Is this southeast area vital to our welfare? Will the United States have a single friend or ally left in the world? The NATO nations of Western Europe are looking with horror on our whole policy in Asia. Looking at a map of the world, where are our friends? Taiwan, if we bolster the economy, Australia, reluctantly, the Philippines (with enough money to keep the government stable, American money). Truly, we have made no friends with our policy of being a big bully.

When we have sent "advisers" into country after country, why do we act like hysterical children when we learn that Russia has sent advisers to the Arab countries? I have trouble following the logic, it is all right for us to do this in countries thousands of miles from our shores but we seem amazed and angry when Russia does the same after years of restraint when Egypt is really quite close to Russia.

You are the Director of the CIA. You are not the President of the United States, however you have influence and you have power. I hope as you go home from work today you think about all the Americans who question the road the United States is taking in world affairs.

Who am I? Just a middle-aged housewife. I'm not a letter-writer but I do read. I remember the silent German population who later said, "why did we let Hitler get us into this awful situation?". I refuse to be silent about a situation which is wrong, secret, tricky.

Now you may put this in the waste basket.

Yours truly,

cc. The Los Angeles Times
Time Magazine
 Senator Stuart Symington

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